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General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

16th plenary meeting
Thursday, 22 September 2016, 6.25 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

In the absence of the President, Mr. El Hayeen (Mauritania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.25 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

Mr. Meredov (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I have the honour to convey to the peoples of the nations represented here greetings and best wishes for their peace and prosperity from His Excellency Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session and to wish him every success in his responsibilities. I would also like to express our appreciation to Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the Assembly at its seventieth session, for his effective work.

The current state of global realities and the nature and direction of their political, economic and social processes require Governments and major international organizations to cooperate ever more closely and with greater coordination if they are to achieve their principal shared goal of ensuring international peace and security and preserving the legal and institutional pillars that form the foundation of today's world order. The effectiveness of that cooperation, and our ability to strike a reasonable balance between national interests and those of the international community as a whole, will also determine to a large degree our success in solving other no less important global problems in the areas of the environment, energy, food security and in combating terrorism, drug trafficking and other challenges.

Unfortunately, we are currently witnessing complex processes that are undermining global cooperation in those areas, foremost among them the ever-expanding area of the world with potential for conflict and the spread of breeding grounds for tension. Conflicts are escalating in various parts of the globe, and the parties involved in them increasingly resort to the use of force and military means. We are seeing brazen disregard and at times outright contempt for the rules of international law.

In view of the situation, Turkmenistan calls on Member States to evaluate such manifestations clearly and unambiguously and to join in supporting strict and scrupulous adherence to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and the foundational international conventions, accords and agreements designed to resolve conflicts. We urge Member States to launch broad-based consultations with a view to identifying uniform conceptual approaches to de-escalating conflict based on international legal standards and under the leadership of the United Nations as a universal mechanism for settling disputes. We think

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it would be advisable to convene a special meeting of the General Assembly, within the framework of the seventy-first session, devoted to strengthening the role of international law in the maintenance of global peace and security.

The role of the peacebuilding tools at the international community's disposal is growing, particularly the potential of the notion of neutrality and its conceptual foundations as a basis for strengthening general stability and security. That received special emphasis at the high-level international conference held in Ashgabat in December 2015 to mark the twentieth anniversary of Turkmenistan's neutral status. We take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to the Member States and international organizations that participated in the forum and contributed to its success. The conference's final document reflects a willingness within the United Nations to consider Turkmenistan's proposal for proclaiming an international day of neutrality. Our country has prepared a draft resolution for the General Assembly on the subject, and we urge the States Members of the United Nations to launch a discussion of the text during this session.

The civilized world is facing a threat that transcends national borders and political and ideological doctrines. Terrorism falls outside human morality and threatens to undermine the entire world order and its principles, values and foundations. It is precisely for that reason that the fight against it must be conducted simultaneously at the global, regional and national levels, taking into account the specific circumstances and political and social realities of each.

For the States of our region, it is crucial that we ensure effective, coordinated action through the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia. The work in that area has recently been significantly intensified and multilateral cooperation in various fields has been strengthened. Major international forums on the issue, organized on Turkmenistan's initiative, have helped to give our joint efforts an essential, clearly defined and substantive regional context. The major documents adopted on the issue in 2011, the Ashgabat Declaration and Action Plan on countering terrorism in Central Asia, will serve as its road map. We believe that they contribute to multilateral efforts aimed at combating the terrorist threat, and their practical implementation will go a long way towards ensuring our shared success in this work. We look forward to more active international cooperation, including that of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

Exactly a year ago today, within these very walls, the World Summit adopted the long-term 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These are our common responsibility, our common objectives. In that context, I would like to specifically stress the need for the implementation of the SDGs in the national plans and programmes of all States Members of the United Nations. Turkmenistan will responsibly and constructively continue to address those issues. Turkmenistan, jointly with the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies, has developed appropriate indicators for the elaboration of its national programmes. Just a few days ago, those indicators were officially adopted by the Government of Turkmenistan.

One of the main focuses of the General Assembly at its current session is the desire for Member States to continue the wide-ranging dialogue on climate change as the most important element of the United Nations comprehensive strategy for the achievement of the SDGs. In our view, national and international instruments are the most important tools for meeting the SDGs. It is appropriate to recall that Turkmenistan's President, speaking at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, said that progress could not be selective and that development would not be truly sustainable and long-lasting unless it were comprehensive and the undeniable right and heritage of all nations, States, regions and continents, without exception.

Turkmenistan fully embodies that tenet in its main approach to the global environmental agenda. Our country has begun to implement its national development plans, which are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, with a true sense of responsibility. At the legislative level, we have adopted the national climate change strategy, which provides for a gradual transition to environmental safety standards in all major spheres of industrial activity. The strategy envisages the priority development of high-technology industries and the creation of conditions for the development of the green economy as a fundamental element for the functioning of our entire infrastructure.

Tomorrow, Turkmenistan will sign the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We regard that

step as a landmark in the overall implementation of environmental tasks and goals. In that connection, we believe that it is high time to fulfil the core of the Paris Agreement by intensifying United Nations efforts aimed at developing new international rules linked to climate change and environmental protection.

At the same time, we need to begin preparing specific regional plans for the near and medium term. We suggest the convening next year, under the auspices of the United Nations, of a special conference dedicated to ways of improving the environmental situation in Central Asia. This year, Turkmenistan will assume the chairmanship of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea. Very shortly, we will begin broad consultations with the States of the region and United Nations specialized entities with a view to developing overall policy and specific arrangements for our joint work during the upcoming period. In Central Asia, we have major reasons to focus on water resources — how they impact regional development, the overall environment and social and economic problem, and what role they play in resolving serious environmental issues. Given the conditions, it has become extremely important for the States of the region to design a unified strategy on the issue of the use and preservation of water resources.

Our country accords top priority to cooperation with the United Nations. In that regard, we believe it is advisable to step up the efforts aimed at implementing the decisions reached at the seventh World Water Forum, held in 2015 in Daegu, Republic of Korea. We view international cooperation in fighting desertification and soil degradation as important areas of work. In 2014, Turkmenistan hosted an international conference on desertification and soil degradation in Central Asia, which was organized jointly by the Government and the United Nations. Delegations from many States took part in the conference, together with international organizations. The outcome document of the conference defines the areas of future work on those issues, which we believe deserve the most scrupulous attention and evaluation at the level of the United Nations.

Today, an effective model for international cooperation is urgently required to reduce the risks of natural disasters. Turkmenistan firmly believes that efforts aimed at reducing the risk of disasters should be automatically incorporated into future programmes and plans for sustainable development and should be implemented with close cooperation at the bilateral, regional and international levels. We call upon Member States to intensify their efforts in that area, on the basis of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which was adopted last year at the Sendai Conference.

Today, as a result of various circumstances, we are facing acute problems because of the number of migrants, refugees and stateless people. It is apparent that there are no magic formulas for solving these problems. Nevertheless, in our view, it is high time to devise targeted international cooperation initiatives, tailored to each specific situation. A key role in that regard should be played by specialized entities of the United Nations, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and by the International Migration Organization, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and other organizations. We stand ready to assist them to the utmost. Our country has had positive experiences in that area. In 2012, jointly with the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, we hosted an international ministerial conference on refugees in the Muslim world. In June 2014, the Government of Turkmenistan, jointly with the International Migration Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, organized the International Conference on Migration and Statelessness: Identifying Challenges and the Way Forward, which was held in Ashgabat.

We call upon all Member States to step up efforts aimed at implementing the main provisions of the outcome documents of those international forums. We also reaffirm our desire and readiness to continue to work closely with the United Nations, Member States and all interested parties in solving this pressing problem of our times.

The comprehensive achievement of the SDGs must be viewed as the main pillar of the Organization's global strategy, which not only has political, social and economic components but is also a moral framework for the modern world order. A great deal has already been achieved. In that connection, we note the role of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, whose determination, political will and persistence have enabled us to achieve some results.

Notwithstanding the diversity of tasks facing each individual country, we are brought together by our common hopes, concerns and threats.

Turkmenistan stands ready to search together with its partners for new approaches and ways to overcome the challenges facing humankind. We reaffirm our steadfast commitment to cooperate with the United Nations, our active involvement in, and support for, its political and diplomatic efforts aimed at preserving and strengthening the existing architecture of global security and implementing its plans and programmes in the economic, social, environmental, humanitarian and other areas. Turkmenistan regards its partnership with the United Nations as a strategic foundation for all its work in the international arena.

Address by Mr. Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic.

Mr. Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Tsipras (Greece): In 2015, we celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations in San Francisco by reflecting on the challenges facing us as an international community and our capacity to resolve them. A year later, the challenges and problems still persist and the same questions remain. Will we be able to bring dynamic, equitable and sustainable growth to our economies with the global economic crisis still upon us? Will we be able to manage migration effectively, on the basis of international law, at a time when the number of displaced people in the world is greater than it has ever been since the Second World War? Will we be able to promote peace and security in an increasingly unstable global and regional environment? Or are we going to allow the forces of nationalism, xenophobia and neoliberalism to dictate ineffective or dangerous responses to the challenges we face?

In that context, the main topic of this year's General Assembly — the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — is more timely than ever. In recent years, Greece has been the member of the eurozone hit the hardest by the economic crisis and the austerity measures imposed to resolve it. As a front-line European Union (EU) State, it has faced the greatest migration flows to the EU since the Second World War. Greece has been at the centre of a region with increasing security challenges, with instability deepening in the Balkans and conflicts worsening in Ukraine in the North, Libya in the West and Syria in the East.

Since I spoke here last year (see A/70/PV.22), Greece has faced these great crises standing strong. Today, our discussion is no longer about our surviving crises. Today, now that we have political and financial stability, we are focusing on ways of promoting economic growth, developing more effective and humane migration management and maintaining peace and security in our broader neighbourhood. Today, we speak about resolving challenges with an impact, not just Greece but in Europe and beyond.

At the economic level, after seven turbulent years of recession, Greece is now emerging from the deepest social and economic crisis in its post-war history. We are working hard to ensure sustainable, inclusive growth. Sometimes, despite our efforts, we take a step backwards, but we always strive to push forward to prove that a country that has lost 25 per cent of its gross domestic product in six years, and watched unemployment and poverty rates skyrocket, can stand on its feet; and to create a business-friendly environment that encourages investment and does away with the sins of corruption, patronage and parasitic business practices.

At the same time, we are confronting the serious social consequences that imposed austerity has inflicted on Greek society. Our absolute priority is to reduce unemployment as soon as possible to the average level for Europe through a new production paradigm that utilizes the potential of our highly educated human capital. At the same time, we are taking advantage of Greece's strategic position at the crossroads of three continents, so that it can establish itself as a hub for energy, trade and maritime and railway transportation in the region. We are promoting necessary reforms, while protecting the welfare State and labour rights. We are urging our partners to proceed to the finalization of the necessary measures for our debt reduction, in order to regain market confidence and prepare the way for our return to capital markets. The first signs that our planning is delivering are already reflected in the return to positive growth rates, the steady downward trend in

unemployment, the positive public finance accounts and the revived investment interest from abroad.

Besides the substantial economic challenge, the Greek people are confronting the enormous challenge of refugee and migration management, a challenge that, as we have already underlined, is global and has to be dealt with collectively, on the basis of our shared values.

Since I spoke here last, over 1 million migrants have entered Greece. Nearly 60,000 migrants remain stranded in Greece today, after our northern borders were shut off through the unilateral action of other countries. An enormous political crisis has erupted in Europe, with increasingly strong xenophobic forces pushing forward their agenda and claiming that respect for international law is a luxury in Europe today and that people should be pushed back into the sea; that sharing the responsibility for hosting refugees is an unacceptable imposition and that front-line States alone should be host countries; and that our economic crisis is reason enough for us to betray our values.

Those xenophobic forces received the answer they deserved, and that answer came from the Greek people. The people of Europe most hard hit by the economic crisis proved to the world that neither our values nor our humanity are conditional. Despite the calls for pushbacks, our coastguard has saved tens of thousands of lives, instead of endangering them. Despite the calls for violating the Geneva Convention, my country, whose asylum service did not exist three years ago, deals fairly and in accordance with the Geneva Convention with the fourth-largest number of asylum applications in Europe.

Together with Turkish and European authorities, we are implementing the very difficult, but necessary, European Union-Turkey agreement. It is an agreement that has led to a decrease in flows, but most important, a decrease in deaths in the Aegean Sea. It has replaced the dangerous route of the Aegean Sea with a legal one to Europe. In that context, today more than ever, we need a strong international initiative that will establish a new global framework for refugee management, thereby undercutting the xenophobic migration agenda. Such a framework must include increased support to countries hosting refugees, increased returns of people not in need of international protection, and the resettlement and relocation of those in need of such protection. Moreover, it must include increased security cooperation against trafficking networks and additional initiatives to tackle the root causes of migration.

The third big challenge that Greece is facing is how to contribute to peace, security and prosperity in an increasingly unstable region. Greece has been very clear in its response to this challenge. We have developed bilateral and, together with the Republic of Cyprus, trilateral relations with all our neighbours with a view to promoting peace, cooperation and international law. We have organized multilateral initiatives, such as the International Conference on Religious and Cultural Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East and the Rhodes Conference on security in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond. And we have consistently promoted these values, in all international organizations, in relation to all the conflicts in our broader region. Furthermore, we are confronting terrorism wherever it emerges and in relation to the conflicts in Syria, Libya and Ukraine and the Middle East peace process.

Today, we have before us a very important challenge to substantially promote peace and stability in our region. We remain steadfast in our support to intercommunal talks for a just, viable and comprehensive solution to the Cyprus issue, on the basis of United Nations resolutions and the status of Cyprus as an EU member State — a solution that can be viable only if we leave behind the anachronistic guarantee system of the past and ensure a withdrawal of Turkish occupying forces from the island. We support a solution that would provide a sense of security and trust to all the people of Cyprus and prepare the ground for broader cooperation in our unstable region.

We have enhanced our dialogue and relations with Turkey through a wide range of initiatives, including our excellent cooperation in managing refugee and migration flows. And we have underlined that the only way to build solid, long-lasting neighbourly relations is by respecting international law. On the name issue of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, we consistently support a mutually acceptable compound name with a geographical qualifier for use in relation to everyone. And we have promoted confidence-building measures that aim to strengthen trust and cross-border cooperation at this crucial time.

Today — unlike a year ago — the challenges we are facing in Greece are opportunities. They are opportunities for the international community, for Europe and for our region. They are opportunities to

turn the page on the crisis of the past and avert new, dangerous crises. We need a just, viable solution in Cyprus that would contribute to changing the unstable dynamics of the region. That is why we need a solution to the debt issue that would contribute to a new sustainable growth model, of the kind we talk about so much here in the United Nations and in Europe, and would leave the vicious cycle of austerity behind.

We also need a global, effective response to the migration crisis, on the basis of international law. This must be a response that undercuts the dangerous xenophobic and nationalistic voices that are emerging so forcefully for the first time since the Second World War. Of course, backward-looking and ultra-conservative forces will attempt to provide solutions to these problems by investing in fear, sometimes labelling themselves anti-systemic forces. Nevertheless, it is very clear that it is not the democratic forces that are critical of the system that the international community should worry about. It is those forces that threaten our values and instead of aiming to change the world for better, aim to divide it through fear, xenophobia and nationalism. Today it is more important than ever to stand by peace, democracy and sustainable growth on all the fronts where they are being challenged, and in Greece we know that very well.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Erlan Idrissov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Idrissov (Kazakhstan): First, let me join the other speakers in congratulating Mr. Peter Thomson on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session and to assure him of our full support. We would also like to express our thanks to His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his most able stewardship of the Assembly at its seventieth session.

This session is convened at a time when the United Nations is facing tremendous challenges. Earlier this week two high-level events sought to address the plight of refugees and considered ways to meet the legitimate expectations of millions of migrant workers.

The global economy is slowing down, thereby affecting all nations' prosperity. New transcontinental trade and investment arrangements may lead to a weakened World Trade Organization and a fragmented world economy. That could signal the beginning of a new round of negative and damaging competition among global markets. The evolution of the global community of nations in the decades to come will depend largely upon our ability to cooperate and find a common language.

Our foreign policy reflects a deep-rooted belief in the power of dialogue. A call for dialogue is the central message of my President, set out in his "Manifesto: the world, the twenty-first century", which has been circulated as an official document of the Security Council and the General Assembly (A/70/818, annex). The Manifesto offers a realistic perspective on the world and an ambitious vision based on unity, rather than division, and on cooperation, rather than rivalry. It identifies a lack of trust among major nations and regional groups as the main obstacle to progress towards a true community of nations. That statement rings especially true in the area of nuclear disarmament, where it is the passionate wish of the President of Kazakhstan to achieve, by 2045, the centennial year of the United Nations, a world free of nuclear weapons.

As a country that closed, 25 years ago, the largest nuclear test site in its territory and renounced the world's fourth-largest nuclear arsenal, we have the full moral right and responsibility to push forward the disarmament process. On 29 August, the International Day against Nuclear Tests, Astana hosted a major international conference that stressed a sense of urgency in dealing with the nuclear threat and generated massive support for the anti-nuclear movement. The outcome document calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to honour their obligations and take practical steps to achieve nuclear zero. In November, the Astana peace summit will be convened in my country to craft a viable strategic approach based on our objective of global peace and security, with nuclear disarmament as a crucial element of any future peace efforts.

My country was the initial sponsor of resolution 70/57, on the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world, which was adopted in December 2015. We host the International Atomic Energy Agency's Low-Enriched Uranium Bank for the peaceful use of nuclear fuel. September marks the tenth anniversary of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia.

Also known as the Treaty of Semipalatinsk, it is the most recent major breakthrough in global disarmament. We support the establishment of similar zones across the globe, and especially in the Middle East, where we believe that such measures will strengthen global and regional security.

Regrettably, international negotiations on nuclear disarmament have stalled, while numerous loopholes in international law are used to sidestep the ban on the military use of nuclear technology. That is why we endorsed the report of the August meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament. The group recommends convening a conference next year to start negotiations on comprehensive and complete nuclear disarmament, with a view to eventually stigmatizing the possession of nuclear weapons. At the same time, we continue to support the Conference on Disarmament and hope that its members will generate enough political will to revitalize the work of that important body, in order to achieve its ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

In the same vein, we will work resolutely towards the universal application and enforcement of all the relevant international instruments. As an article XIV co-Chair of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, we stand for a complete ban on nuclear testing and believe that the unacceptable and irresponsible actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea seriously undermine stability and security in North-East Asia and worldwide. Furthermore, such actions have undermined the entire disarmament process.

Controlling the means of delivery is a vital element of disarmament. As a Chair of The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, we will submit a draft resolution to the General Assembly in October to stress the importance of the universal application of The Hague Code.

Kazakhstan's Manifesto declares war on war and calls for the total elimination of that ugly phenomenon from our lives. We continue to stress the fact that the existence of military blocs hinders international cooperation and creates situations in which the security of individual countries is ensured at the expense of others. Moreover, sanctions and economic fragmentation are counterproductive and create new lines of division that serve to alienate nations.

Genuine security is based on mutual dialogue. With that idea in mind, our President played a role in restoring cooperative relations between Russia and Turkey. Kazakhstan's initiative on Islamic rapprochement was favourably received at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Summit in April. Next year we will promote a high-level event under United Nations auspices to highligh the principles of international law, with a view to re-establishing the vital role of international organizations.

As a country with an impeccable record of religious tolerance, Kazakhstan pays particular attention to following up the decisions and recommendations of the triennial meetings of the Astana-based Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. We are grateful to the President of the General Assembly for convening a high-level conversation in May to address the role of political and religious leaders in building bridges and spreading messages of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. That event was followed by a high-profile gathering in Astana that focused on finding a balance between fighting terrorism and extremism, on the one hand, while ensuring individual rights and freedoms, on the other. Our efforts to promote interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance complement the work of other countries in the context of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures 2013-2022, initiated by Kazakhstan.

The Manifesto underlines the importance of such principles as shared responsibility for peace and security, mutual respect and non-interference. Neglecting those principles has contributed to the destruction of the sovereignty and statehood of some States and the current humanitarian crisis triggered by unprecedented flows of refugees and migrants.

Kazakhstan is committed to strengthening United Nations peacekeeping capabilities, which are one of the pillars of the United Nations. My country signed the London communiqué of the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial Meeting and confirmed its commitment to deploy a full unit with United Nations peacekeeping operations.

We welcome the establishment of the new Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System and fully endorse the creation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Strategic Force Generation and Capability Planning Cell. We also commend the comprehensive review of peacekeeping operations by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and welcome the Secretary-General's response. Kazakhstan is

committed to ensuring that peacekeeping is effective. It has also contributed military personnel to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire.

This year Kazakhstan is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary of independence. I remember that back in 1991 some observers doubted Kazakhstan's ability to survive as a sovereign nation, given its multi-ethnic, religiously diverse population, unbalanced economy and huge material and moral burden in the form of a military infrastructure and a nuclear arsenal. That legacy was a challenge that we managed to turn into an opportunity. Over the past quarter of a century we have completed a journey from a non-existing country on the political map, to a stable middle-income nation and respected member of the international community.

We consider our election to the Security Council as international recognition of our sound and mature foreign policy and a deserved achievement of our independence. Indeed, the two-year tenure on the Security Council is a responsibility that we will shoulder with the utmost seriousness and pride. We will strive to contribute to the Council's work in the maintenance of international peace and security, preventive diplomacy, conflict settlement and post-conflict rehabilitation, peacekeeping, human rights, gender equality and international law. Central Asia will be represented on the Council for the first time in its history, and our membership is a chance to draw the attention of the Security Council to regional security issues. Our grand idea is to make the region a zone of peace, cooperation and security.

In that context, we believe that the situation in Afghanistan is essential to the security and stability of Central Asia. We have a genuine interest in promoting a political settlement and furthering the social and economic development of that country. Kazakhstan is investing more than $50 million to educate Afghan students, build schools and hospitals and provide humanitarian assistance. We pledged to provide a further $2 million to support the Afghan army. Together with Japan and the United Nations Development Programme, we are helping to improve the nation's civil-service capacity, with a special emphasis on gender equality.

We are keen, both within the Security Council and General Assembly, to promote our President's idea about creating a global anti-terrorism coalition or network. This is designed to strengthen and capitalize on synergies in the various counter-terrorism initiatives. Specifically, we are focusing on making all 19 counter-terrorism conventions universal and on developing a unified list of terrorist organizations, a unified extradition mechanism and a comprehensive legally binding international terrorism convention. Kazakhstan is actively engaged in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

When we take up our responsibilities in the Security Council next year, we will be ready to facilitate the further reintegration of Iran in political and economic areas. Our record of promoting a mutually beneficial deal on the Iranian nuclear programme is well known. My country helped break the deadlock on the Iranian programme by supporting a constructive dialogue among stakeholders and hosting two rounds of multilateral talks in Kazakhstan. In December 2015, Kazakhstan provided natural uranium to Iran as part of an International Atomic Energy Agency-monitored transaction, in support of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. It is our intention to reinvest the political dividends we obtained to make further progress in this direction.

We hope that our regional expertise, together with our experience derived from chairing various regional bodies — including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia — will be an asset in addressing vital issues of peace and security on the Security Council agenda.

Kazakhstan is firmly committed to being part of the solution to the global issue of sustainability and climate change. Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which we pledge to ratify well before the end of 2016, are vitally important. Kazakhstan is therefore proud to host in Astana the international exhibition EXPO-2017 on the theme "Energy of the Future", which will showcase renewable energy sources relevant for both the developed and developing world. During EXPO-2017, we will also host the first-ever Organization of Islamic Cooperation summit on science and technology, a unique gathering designed to promote the modernization of the Islamic world.

With a view to promoting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7 — on affordable and clean energy — we are working with the relevant United Nations agencies and research institutions to establish, under the auspices of the United Nations, an international centre for the development of green technologies and investment projects, as part of the EXPO-2017 legacy. We will continue to promote water, food and energy security in order to build a safer and more prosperous regional neighbourhood. As part of our commitment to SDG 2, relating to ending hunger, Kazakhstan hosted in a meeting in April of the OIC agriculture ministers and the inaugural session of the General Assembly of the Islamic Organization for Food Security, headquartered in Astana.

Within Central Asia, Kazakhstan strives to increase regional connectivity by giving priority to transport infrastructure projects and developing regional trade and economic integration. I would like to stress that commitment to sustainable development is an integral part of our domestic agenda. Our national development strategies and programmes are directly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, my country pursues a set of modernization reforms aimed at better, more efficient and transparent governance, rule of law, and civil service. The reforms focus on people-oriented Government and the creation of a middle-class society.

Kazakhstan remains committed to cooperating actively with United Nations human rights mechanisms and pays special attention to gender equality and the empowerment of women. By the end of the year, we will have adopted a new 2030 national strategy for gender equality.

In order to achieve the objectives of peace and development, Kazakhstan has offered to host a United Nations regional hub in Almaty, our southern capital, to focus on sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, disaster-risk reduction and resilience-building. We are aiming to complete the technical stages of this process within the next two years. Another United Nations regional hub, to promote civil service excellence, is already operational in Astana. The Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre plays an important role in streamlining regional efforts to counter drug trafficking.

We are convinced that, as the leading global institution, the United Nations needs stewardship of the highest quality, integrity, strength and moral authority. We are closely following the deliberations of the Security Council on the selection of a new Secretary-General and hope that this individual will meet the highest expectations of all Member States. We express our deepest heartfelt gratitude to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his dedication, integrity and professionalism.

Modern challenges require that the Organization adapt to new realities in order to improve its effectiveness in dealing with international problems, preventing threats and overcoming challenges. United Nations reform should be carried out in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, on the basis of consensus and in the interests of all Member States.

As a trusted, objective and steadfast partner of the United Nations and all Member States, Kazakhstan will forge ahead with resolute determination in the pursuit of global peace and security. Undaunted, but approaching the task with healthy pragmatism, we will join others in stepping forward with new hope and optimism.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by expressing our gratitude to the President and to the Secretary-General for their notable efforts in carrying out their mandates.

The statistics could not be more eloquent — 80 per cent of the world's population owns only 6 per cent of the wealth, while the wealthiest 1 per cent enjoys half of the world's patrimony. No less than 795 million people suffer from chronic hunger, and 18,000 children die every day due to poverty. More than 660 million people consume non-potable water, and 780 million adults and 103 million young people are illiterate. It is quite likely that they have never heard of the Millenium Development Goals, but if they had they would scarcely believe in the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The gap between our deliberations and the realities of our peoples is persistent. The lack of political will of industrialized countries is clear. We see the perpetuation of the irrational patterns of capitalist production and consumption that lead to the degradation of living conditions on our planet. The enormous

conventional and nuclear stockpiles and the annual military expenditures of $1.7 trillion contradict those who claim that we lack the resources to end poverty and underdevelopment.

However, there are many arguments that justify the urgency of building a new international financial architecture. In developed countries, welfare societies are disappearing, political systems are in crisis, pockets of poverty are expanding, brutal neoliberal adjustment programmes are used against workers, young people and migrants, and dark and dangerous neo-fascist forces gain strength.

The philosophy of plundering underpins NATO countries' military interventions and non-conventional wars against sovereign States as they seek to overthrow Governments and appropriate natural resources. The imposition of unilateral coercive measures and the use of financial, legal, cultural and media tools to destabilize Governments has become our daily bread. The militarization and aggressive use of cyberspace, the violation of the human rights of hundreds of millions of people, and the waves of refugees driven by underdevelopment and NATO interventions towards Europe are evidence of the cruelty, oppressive nature, inefficiency and unsustainability of the current international order, without there being a single response based on respect for human rights and the dignity of persons or aiming at resolving the root causes of the problems.

The year 2015 was also one of the worst in terms of climate change, with mounting global temperatures, the melting of the polar ice caps, the rise in sea levels and an increase in greenhouse-gas emissions. Under these circumstances, we reiterate our solidarity with the small island developing States, especially in the Caribbean, which are the most deeply affected by climate change and for which we demand fair, special and differential treatment.

While we all expect to see some progress in the fulfilment by industrialized countries of the obligations entered into under the ambiguous Paris Agreement on Climate Change, only tangible data on financing and transfers of technology to developing countries can justify hopes for the survival of the human species. However, capitalism will never be historically or environmentally sustainable.

Peace and development are the raison d'être of the United Nations. The creation of a culture of peace and justice as the basis of a new international order is an urgent and imperative need for the human species. Any attempt to prolong the existence of a unipolar world through war, domination or hegemony would be suicidal. The observance of the Charter of the United Nations and international law are indispensable for peaceful coexistence among States.

The United Nations must be defended from unilateralism. At the same time, it needs to be reformed into a more democratic Organization, one that is closer to the problems, needs and aspirations of people. It must be capable of leading the international system towards peace, sustainable development and respect for all human rights for everyone.

The reform of the Security Council, in both its composition and its working methods, is a task that should not be postponed any longer. The strengthening of the General Assembly and the restoration of the functions that were usurped by the Security Council should guide our search for a more democratic and efficient Organization.

It is imperative to find a just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict, inexorably based on the exercise of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to build its own State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The situation of the Western Sahara requires an effort pursuant to the relevant United Nations resolutions to guarantee the self-determination of the Sahrawi people and respect for their legitimate right to live in peace in their territory.

Once again, we reiterate our confidence that the people of the Syrian Arab Republic will be able to resolve their differences on their own when the foreign intervention aimed at promoting regime change ceases.

NATO's attempts to expand its presence closer to Russia's borders and the deployment of its anti-missile systems are an incentive to the arms race and a threat to international peace and security. Similarly, we express our opposition to the unjust and unilateral sanctions imposed against the Russian people that are also harmful to Europe.

Cuba, which has been the victim of State terrorism, reiterates its strong condemnation of all forms and manifestations of terrorism.

The Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, signed in Havana by the Heads of State and Government of our region in January 2014, during the third Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, establishes principles and rules for coexistence, cooperation and respect among States that are indispensable for the realization of the right to peace and applicable to relations within our America and its relations with the hemisphere and the world.

We welcome the historic General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace, which was reached in Havana on 24 August. We will do our best, always at the request of the parties, to support its implementation.

We will continue to support the Government and the people of Venezuela, the civic-military union and Constitutional President Nicolás Maduro Moros in defence of its sovereignty and self-determination against the imperialist and oligarchic interference that is attempting to destroy the Bolivarian and Chavista revolution to take over Venezuela's oil reserves and reverse the enormous social achievements that have been attained.

We strongly condemn the parliamentary and judicial coup d'état perpetrated in Brazil against President Dilma Rousseff and express our solidarity with her, the Brazilian people, the Workers' Party and former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

We reiterate our conviction that the Puerto Rican people deserve to be free and independent, after more than a century under colonial rule.

We will not renounce any of our revolutionary and anti-imperialist principles, the defence of independence, social justice and peoples' rights, nor our commitment to cooperate with those in greatest need. Cuban cooperation workers, who work on all continents, will continue to make their contribution, including the 46,000 persons who are currently working in 61 countries fighting for the life and health of human beings.

The Cuban Medical Professional Parole Programme, applied by the United States of America to pursue the political objective of impeding Cuba's medical cooperation and deprive the recipient countries and Cuba of valuable and highly qualified human resources, is a shameful obstacle.

Just over a year has elapsed since the restoration of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States and the reopening of their respective Embassies. Some progress has been achieved in our bilateral relations, particularly in diplomatic relations, dialogue and cooperation in areas of common interest, as evidenced by high-level visits, including a visit by President Obama, and the dozen of agreements signed on subjects that could render benefits to both countries and the entire hemisphere. However, the fact is that the blockade remains in force. It continues to cause serious damage and hardship for the Cuban people and hampers the functioning of our economy and our relations with other countries.

Executive measures adopted by the Government of the United States, although positive, are still insufficient. There are many recent examples of the economic, commercial and financial damage caused by the blockade to Cuba and to third countries. As long as this continues to happen, we will continue to present the draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" for consideration by the Assembly.

We reiterate the readiness of the Government of Cuba to continue developing a respectful dialogue with the Government of the United States, while knowing that we still have a long way to go if we are to normalize our relations, which means building a model of bilateral relations that is a totally new in terms of our common history that can never be forgotten. For this to be possible some day, it will be essential for the blockade to be lifted. In addition, the territory illegally occupied by the United States Naval Base at Guantánamo, against the will of Cuba, must be returned to us.

The Cuban people, even amid the adverse conditions imposed by the current international scenario and the persistence of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States, continues to be involved in updating the economic and social model that it has decided to implement in a fully sovereign way in order to build an independent, sovereign, socialist, prosperous and sustainable nation.

Address by Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta.

Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Muscat (Malta): Allow me to join my colleagues in expressing my country's deepest gratitude and appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his sterling work.

This seventy-first session of the General Assembly is marked primarily by the high-level meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. The outcome document of this meeting, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), will spur us to work further to address the enormous movement of people, the likes of which we have not seen since the Second World War.

Last year, this gathering considered that migration had reached crisis levels. Today, we are increasingly realizing that this phenomenon is set to become a new normal that needs to be managed. Despite the difficult debates, discussions, stumbling blocks and widely divergent viewpoints, it is encouraging to see how far we have come and how much we have found that truly unites us, underpinned by the most fundamental principles of saving lives and upholding human dignity. Nevertheless, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. I must confess I am still concerned that all the soft words we have heard will be undermined by hard facts. Despite this, we owe it to everyone to give it a try.

We need to respond to this challenge, not with fear, not with dread, not by enclosing ourselves within walls, but with tenacity, conviction and compassion. This is what drives my country, time and again, to push for migration to be high on our agenda. Together with our European partners, and sometimes on our own, or almost, Malta has been working tirelessly to address the common concerns and challenges being presented. In that respect, our international efforts to address migrant smuggling and human trafficking through measures aimed at disrupting the business models of criminals, who harbour a total disregard for human life and profit from other people's tragedies, are key. Though commendable, these efforts need to be stepped up. Information-sharing, improved implementation of national enforcement policies and stronger penalties to punish smugglers are essential dimensions of an effective response to this challenge.

I believe people-smugglers are in the same category as the worst type of criminals and must be treated as such. We should seriously consider a structure where traffickers are brought to justice before an international tribunal in order to drive home the message that we are looking at this tragedy not only from the humanitarian angle, which is appropriate, but also from the security perspective, and that profiting from human trafficking does not pay.

Malta believes that there is no such thing as a unilateral solution to migration. A global perspective is required. Closer cooperation among the countries of origin, transit and destination is essential and needed. This was the focus of the Valletta summit on migration, which we were proud to have host lasted November in Malta, when European and African leaders met to see what they can do together and for one another.

Having just participated in the General Assembly high-level summit, I am immensely pleased and encouraged to see that the New York Declaration and the spirit of the Valletta summit live on, at least in words and in intentions. Unfortunately, most follow-up actions still need to be implemented. As I have said previously, steps need to be taken now, especially by those countries that bear the moral responsibility for mass movements, either through their actions or their inaction.

The Somali-British poet Warsan Shire writes in her poem entitled "Home" that

> "no one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land".

My country's vision is for a safe Mediterranean region that offers peace, wealth, stability and work.

The situation in the Middle East has a huge bearing on that of our region and of the entire world. It pains me to dwell on the fact that we are still absolutely nowhere near a solution in the context of the Middle East peace process. Malta is deeply concerned about the lack of progress towards a just and lasting peace in the region.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains dire. We call on all parties to change the political, security and economic structures, including the end of the closure and a full opening of the crossing points to assist Palestinians in Gaza in rebuilding their lives. On the other hand, Malta continues to believe that the State of Israel's legitimate right to exist must not be called into question. We believe that Israelis have the right to live in peace within secure borders. With a clear view on the rights of the Israelis and Palestinians, my country continues to back initiatives aimed at rekindling the prospects for peace talks and for keeping the two-State solution alive. But in doing so we acknowledge that there is a need to create the right conditions for rebuilding trust as a means of bringing the two parties back to the negotiating table. To achieve this, both sides must take bold steps and refrain from all actions that undermine progress in the resumed peace talks. We support international efforts aimed at creating new dynamics around the peace process that would build upon other efforts towards a lasting solution, including the Arab Peace Initiative and the French initiative. We hope that there will be the right traction to create the conditions for a lasting and durable solution.

In our most immediate neighbourhood, Malta has supported, and will continue to support, its neighbour Tunisia towards stability and democracy. Despite facing serious challenges, Tunisia is gradually emerging as the first, albeit fragile, Arab democracy. But for it to succeed, it is important that the international community not abandon Tunisia at this critical juncture.

Yet while Tunisia offers hope, the overall picture in Libya continues to be bleak. I am afraid that I am one of the few speakers to have mentioned Libya. I must note the important, incremental positive developments. We have managed to come a considerable way since last December, and Malta commends and continues to support the hard work of the United Nations and the Secretary-General's Special Representatives, including their unrelenting efforts and perseverance to improve the political setting for a stable and democratic Libya. We also welcome the recent adoption of resolution 2298 (2016), allowing for the destruction of the chemical weapons present in the country. That is a commendable effort aimed at reducing the risk of these weapons fall ing into the hands of extremists.

However, despite this progress, the situation remains fragile. The Libyan population needs a concretely functioning Government that addresses their basic needs — proper medication, food security and education. As neighbours, we stand by the Libyan people's efforts to transform their country into a safe, democratic and unified State, with a reconciled people, where State authority and the rule of law are restored. I am certain that this is the dream of our Libyan friends themselves. We reiterate the need to remain supportive of the Libyan Peace Accord and the Presidency Council and to respect Libyan sovereignty and take into account Libyan ownership.

This has been a year of atrocious terrorist acts against innocent victims. Bystanders — men, women and children — have been killed while going about their daily lives, going to work, taking a stroll, eating with family and praying. This year has seen a rise in the spread of a culture of violence and death that is spanning continents and hurting people of every gender, race and creed. No religion or belief in discrimination can ever be a defensible cause for maiming, terrorizing or killing others.

A global society that is truly determined to counter all facets of terrorism must rise above prescriptive pronouncements and take action. In that regard, Malta believes that the United Nations is central to the global fight against terrorism. As host to the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law, Malta believes that the most effective way to counter terrorism is by empowering the rule of law and strengthening the judiciary in States where terrorist activity is gaining ground. This is what this centre is doing, without much fanfare, each and every day.

All of these aspects are priority areas for Malta, which is currently Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth of Nations and is looking forward to holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union during the first half of next year. As we near this milestone in our political history, Malta continues to successfully broaden its foreign-policy focus. While our neighbourhood will naturally remain among the leading priorities for the months and years to come, our country seeks to intensify its outreach to other regions and countries that present potential for further exchanges. The overriding driving force of our global perspective is oriented towards dialogue and mutual understanding — a vocation to which Malta has genuinely adhered for decades.

As I have suggested previously, Malta is deeply committed to Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and

cooperation, inspired by our long-lasting policy, forged by former Prime Minister Dom Mintoff, based on the principle that there can be no peace and security in Europe without peace and security in the Mediterranean. We believe that this principle was never more true than today and that it can be broadened to say that there can be no peace and security, not just in Europe but in the world, without peace and security in the Mediterranean. This vision will be a primary driving force behind Malta's presidency of the Council of the European Union. Countries bordering the southern Mediterranean shores are facing serious challenges, ranging from conflict to terrorism to extremism and radicalization. These are all challenges that cannot be addressed by individual countries and which require concerted resolve and action.

Apart from ensuring ownership of this cause by all stakeholders in the region, Malta will also promote the fostering of better synergies among regional Mediterranean mechanisms — including the Five+Five, the Union for the Mediterranean and the Anna Lindh Foundation — to address threats and achieve shared goals. Furthermore, the Maltese presidency of the European Council will endeavour to continue strengthening relations with the League of Arab States with the aim of consolidating institutions and achieving better relations. We will also continue to actively support the revitalization of relations with the Gulf States and the Gulf Cooperation Council, which would also serve as another opportunity to step up multilevel regional cooperation with the European Union.

Over the past 70 years, the United Nations has strived to work together to achieve peace, security, development and human rights. In spite of the atrocities we have witnessed in past years, we must continue to hold onto these principles. We must not allow fear to be the driving, and at times paralysing, force. We must continue to keep in mind the larger picture and recognize that our diversity is our strength, that to understand each other fortifies our progress and that one people's concerns are collectively our concerns. Malta will continue to play its part within the Organization to contribute, support and advance its initiatives and to foster new ones for the common good.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Agapito Mba Mokuy, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Mba Mokuy (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): In taking the floor at the General Assembly on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, I would like first to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson for his fitting election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I wish him every success as he carries out his functions. I also extend my congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, the outgoing President, for all the innovations introduced to the Assembly and for his work in general. In particular, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who is attending the general debate of the General Assembly for the last time as Secretary-General. I thank him for his contribution to conflict resolution in the world and his 10 years of service to humankind. I wish him every success in his future endeavours.

Today the world is witnessing an overwhelming and unrelenting wave of migrants fleeing conflict areas, particularly in Iraq and Syria — as well as from Africa to Europe — trying to find a safe and quiet place to live. Terrorism continues to leave innocent victims in its wake in every region, thereby constituting a real threat to the well-being and development of humankind. Political instability is endangering the lives of thousands of human beings in many countries. The economic crisis is becoming increasingly worse and more unpredictable, thus negatively affecting the growth and social and economic development of our countries. The crisis is having particularly strong impacts on developing countries, where there are still communities that suffer from hunger, malnutrition and extreme poverty. In a world as complicated and complex as ours is today, the role of the United Nations is more essential than ever.

Therefore, united, we must bring about true democracy within our Organization. United, we must protect our planet for the sake of our offspring. United, we must respect and help one another. United, we must give priority to human values, not only in terms of respect of human rights but also in terms of respect for the rights of humankind. As such, we will be able to strengthen our United Nations and ensure a better future for generations to come. As policymakers we run the risk of incurring our collective historical condemnation if our ambition and sense of superiority continue to lead us down the path of destroying our own human species, polluting our planet and shattering the foundations of

peaceful coexistence, to which future generations are entitled.

By 2030, the States Members of the United Nations should have transformed the lives of all and conserved our planet. That is the goal and commitment that the leaders of our Organization undertook at the seventieth session of the General Assembly in September 2015 by adopting the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets. Indeed, there is an urgent need to achieve the Goals, each and every one of which is necessary and essential for the development of a decent life for every human being.

The Common African Position on the post-2015 development agenda has been very useful in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. It identifies substantive issues of importance for Africa, which were the basis of a consensus on the priorities, concerns and strategies of Africa that was reflected in the outcome of the negotiation process of the 2030 Agenda.

With regard to progress made in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that, in keeping with its ambition to become an emerging country by 2020, the Government of Equatorial Guinea has fully integrated the Sustainable Development Goals into its Horizon 2020 programme. With the programme, the Government is giving priority to its economic and social transformation through developing human capital and inclusive and sustainable growth. In recent years, important progress has been made in all sectors.

In the health-care sector, the World Health Organization has qualified Equatorial Guinea as one of the few countries in the region that has been able to considerably reduce the risks leading to maternal and infant mortality during pregnancy and childbirth, thanks to the practice of preventive medicine and free vaccinations. Children, pregnant women and the elderly receive free health services and equal access to drugs.

In the economic arena, Equatorial Guinea is focusing on diversifying its productive sector, thereby creating jobs for youth in such areas as industrial fishing, agriculture and hydrocarbon exports, all of which is aimed at improving the quality of life of the people. Through a programme of water, electricity and health care for all, citizens throughout the country have access to drinking water, electricity and health services.

At the international level, we would point out the Government of Equatorial Guinea's donations to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to fight hunger on the African continent and its donations to the World Health Organization to fight the Ebola pandemic and improve the health of the victims in the most affected countries.

As the General Assembly can see, although much remains to be done, the Government of Equatorial Guinea has made great strides in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, in part thanks to the good use of resources from the hydrocarbons sector, which is the main source of income for its economy.

In tandem with the implementation of the Development Goals, we note that many citizens of countries in our Organization continue to live in insecurity and fear and under threat. The refugee crisis requires a new approach. We value and commend the decision adopted by the Governments of several Western African and other countries to receive and help the refugees start a new life.

As the Assembly will recall, on 3 September 2015, the photos of young Aylan Kurdi, only 3 years old, who died on the sands of a Turkish beach after drowning — may God rest his soul — moved us all and appealed to our deepest human feelings. A 13-year-old Syrian immigrant also appealed to us when he appeared before the microphones of the international press and said,

> "Please help the Syrians. We do not want to stay in Europe. Stop the war in Syria, and you will not see us here".

We believe that the statement made by the young Syrian must give us new direction in our efforts towards confronting the migration crisis that we are experiencing today. We recognize that the policy of partnering with one of the belligerent parties and supplying them with weapons can only lead to death, suffering, destruction and the attendant migrant and refugee crisis. That policy has caused many years of suffering in so many countries that were once stable and peaceful models of coexistence but are now experiencing the worst human tragedy in their history.

We must again choose the path of dialogue, rather than that of weapons procurement. We must put an end to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We must

resolve conflicts by other means and promote a culture of peace, not of violent confrontation. When any person suffers, it concerns us all. When one nation is at war, we are all at war and there is no peace.

As President John F. Kennedy stated in his commencement speech at American University, on 10 June 1963,

> "[G]enuine peace [is] the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living — the kind that enables man and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children ... not merely peace for [some] but peace for all men and women, not merely peace in our time but peace for all time ...
>
> "For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

I am the representative of a country that aspires to a seat in the Security Council within two years. Since our accession to national independence on 12 October 1968, almost 48 years ago, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea has not yet had the privilege of membership of the Security Council. Duly endorsed by the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held in Johannesburg in July 2015, our country became, for the first time, a candidate for non-permanent membership of the Security Council for the 2018-2019 term. The election will be held in June 2017. From this rostrum, the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea requests the determined support of all States Members of the United Nations for our candidacy. The Government of Equatorial Guinea pledges to live up to the task and to work for a more just, more humane and more peaceful world.

With respect to reforms that are absolutely necessary for the United Nations, we regret to note that, 71 years after the United Nations was established, Africa continues to lack permanent representation at the highest level of the Organization. Seventy-one years later, Africa continues to be denied the right to a voice, vote and veto among the group of permanent members of the Security Council. That is not fair for a continent that comprises 54 Member States, a population of 1.1 billion people and whose issues constitute the majority of the topics discussed in the Council.

I cannot conclude without congratulating, once again, the Government of the United States of America for the major step taken in restoring dialogue with the Republic of Cuba. We therefore call on the Government and the people of the United States of America to finally and definitively lift the embargo against the Cuban people, to enable that country to have the means to fully participate in the national and multinational implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The foregoing is the message entrusted to me by His Excellency Obiang Nguema Mbasogo for delivery to the General Assembly, to which I offer my best wishes for success in its work to achieve a more peaceful, more humane and more democratic world. May God bless the Republic of Equatorial Guinea and may God bless the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Eladio Ramón Loizaga Lezcano, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Loizaga Lezcano (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Republic of Paraguay, I congratulate Ambassador Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at this session. I wish him every success and assure him of my delegation's support.

We also acknowledge Ambassador Mogens Lykketoft, who helped keep the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the heart of our deliberations and initiated, after 70 years, a ground-breaking process of openness and transparency in electing the next Secretary-General, which will be an important milestone in the history our Organization.

I also take the opportunity, on behalf of President Horacio Manuel Cartes Jara, to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless work during the past 10 years, his humanity and his commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. We are confident that his legacy will live on and serve as an inspiration to the next person to assume the responsibility. On behalf of the Paraguayan people, I reiterate our appreciation for his historic visit to the Republic of Paraguay.

We live in an increasingly complex and interconnected world with an international context that is constantly evolving. Traditional armed conflicts have nearly disappeared, but terrorism in its most cowardly and intolerant form has reached global dimensions

and is characterized by the emergence of increasingly cruel and inhuman groups that scorn human life and lack any respect for rights and fundamental freedoms. The effects of climate change and pollution continue to worsen, and pandemics threaten our planet.

The global challenges that transcend physical borders and to which no State is immune cannot be confronted individually. It is therefore essential to promote collective, comprehensive strategies, based on shared responsibility. Furthermore, we cannot lose sight of other priority challenges such as eradicating poverty, reducing inequality and ensuring a life of dignity for all.

We are saddened and concerned about the situation endured by refugees and migrants in various parts of the world. The scale of the refugee crisis should lead us to think, not only of responses to their most pressing needs, but about the importance of resolving the root causes that have led these people to flee their homes and embark on perilous journeys in which they face terrifying uncertainty.

Today, given the new and complex contexts, the main purposes of the United Nations — to find solutions to the international problems in the economic, social, cultural and humanitarian spheres and to promote respect for human rights — have not lost their relevance. On the contrary, they are more compelling than ever. However, the Organization requires reform that brings it up to date and helps it to come up with appropriate and effective responses.

The General Assembly must be strengthened. It is the highest expression of the democracy of the countries that constitute it. Sovereign equality is the cornerstone of its structure. It is the Parliament of the world. We believe that this year, given the public hearings that have taken place with the candidates, men and women alike, we have taken an important step in strengthening its role and in increasing transparency in the process of selecting the next Secretary-General. Paraguay would like a Secretary-General who attaches priority to preventive diplomacy and mediation and who, as the main person responsible for the administration, will ensure that the system of the United Nations exemplifies inclusion and promotes national diversity and gender balance in its staff.

Reform should also encompass our executive branch, the Security Council, the body in charge of maintaining international peace and security. We need a more democratic and representative Council with more space for developing countries — a Council that is transparent, inclusive and accountable for its actions. I would like to mention that Paraguay aspires to be a member of that body from 2028 to 2029. The Republic of Paraguay reaffirms its commitment to international law and multilateralism. Unilateral action in international relations only negatively affects the weakest countries.

A fundamental pillar of peaceful and harmonious coexistence among States is the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We advocate for such energy programmes, developed with full precautions so as to limit the degradation that its products can cause to the environment. States that carry out such programmes should do so on the basis of broad, cross-border responsibility. They should follow best practices based on international cooperation, prevention of the risk of damage, and due diligence, responding appropriately to possible cross-border damage.

All nations of the world are called upon to prevent threats to peace and to adopt appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace, especially with regard to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Collective and responsible action is necessary in order to address the various situations that endanger the lives and security of civilians and that affect the political stability of entire countries and regions.

Paraguay reaffirms its willingness to continue contributing to the personnel of peacekeeping operations. Today, there are Paraguayan personnel deployed in seven of those operations. The Republic of Paraguay strongly condemns terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations and stands in solidarity with victims and the suffering caused to them and their families by terrorist acts. Last month, our country suffered a criminal attack that killed Paraguayan military personnel in the performance of their duties. We are grateful for expressions of solidarity from the international community, and we reaffirm our commitment to the struggle against terrorism in the framework of international law and with full respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

Our Government, founded on traditional relations of friendship and cooperation with the Republic of China on Taiwan, appeals for that country to have an enhanced presence in the agencies and programmes of the United Nations system.

Poverty and inequality are drivers of political instability. They degrade the social fabric and condemn the most vulnerable to a life of exclusion and want. The historic promise embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to eradicate poverty everywhere and if possible forever, within 15 years, is, therefore, unprecedented in history. With that in mind, my country's Government is implementing inclusive development plans and programmes for the progressive realization of the economic and social rights of our citizens and in doing so works to improve their quality of life, which in turn will contribute to strengthening our democracy.

The sustained economic growth of Paraguay in recent years and the implementation of its social protection strategies have made it possible for thousands of Paraguayan families to emerge from extreme poverty. However, our challenge is not only to continue making progress in that direction but to avoid having those who emerge from poverty fall back into it. Our most iconic initiatives and social protection schemes involve conditional monetary transfers, school lunches and pensions for the elderly. We also have specific programmes to put an end to the intergenerational transmission of poverty, such as the Sowing Opportunities Programme, which improves families' access to health and education and prioritizes women who are the heads of their households. In Paraguay, we strongly promote infrastructure, and we are taking measures to improve transparency and accountability in public institutions. "The public domain open to the public." That is our Government's motto.

Additionally, we encourage productive development by promoting investments, with the understanding that the private sector plays an important role in creating opportunities that help provide jobs for all and decent work. Countries like ours, which greatly depend on natural resources, are more vulnerable to climate change. Therefore, for Paraguay, the Paris Agreement is a priority. I would like to announce that the National Congress has approved the Agreement, and in a few days we will put the relevant ratification into effect.

International trade is a pillar of sustainable development. However, landlocked developing countries face special needs and challenges in their efforts to be full and effective members of the global economy and benefit from it. The Republic of Paraguay urges developed countries to allow increased access to their markets for products from landlocked developing countries through their inclusion in systems of generalized preferences, trade financing programmes and programmes of aid for trade, and by promoting the integration of landlocked countries into global and regional production chains. The Republic of Paraguay is fighting for the prompt implementation of the Bali Agreement on Trade Facilitation, which will undoubtedly result in increased competitiveness in global markets.

Young people are the most important human capital of a country, and Paraguay has one of the largest youth populations among Latin American countries. Convinced that we must prepare them for the challenges of contributing to a better and more just society, our Government has started the Don Antonio Carlos López Scholarship Programme for studies abroad, which has benefitted hundreds of youth. This year, we also launched the first call announcing specialized study scholarships for teachers in all parts of the country.

Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international community has seen great progress in the international promotion and protection of human rights. One of the most significant steps was the establishment of the Human Rights Council, which celebrates its tenth anniversary this year. For Paraguay, a current member, it is essential to strengthen the Council, give it the necessary tools to persevere in its mandate, and eliminate any obstacles that may weaken it. We proudly emphasize that our country has developed the Recommendations Monitoring System, which makes it possible to transparently and openly verify compliance with international recommendations on human rights at the national level. We have made that mechanism available to all States interested in replicating it in the context of their national realities.

Paraguay welcomes the historic bilateral agreement and definitive ceasefire between the Republic of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, and congratulates all those who made it possible. The Paraguayan people extend their best wishes to Colombia, with whom we are joined in bonds of historical and unbreakable friendship. We genuinely hope that this new stage will be one of national reconciliation and unification, so that together the country may face the challenges ahead in order to build a country in peace and social justice where no one is excluded.

We support the use of dialogue, good-faith political solutions and peaceful means as the only tools suitable for resolving conflicts, so that agreements that promote lasting and sustainable peace in the framework of international law can be achieved.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Sir Puka Temu, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister and Minister for Public Service of Papua New Guinea.

Sir Puka Temu (Papua New Guinea): Papua New Guinea appreciates and applauds the outgoing President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mogens Lykketoft, for his outstanding guidance of the General Assembly in the conduct of its business this past year.

Papua New Guinea is delighted to see a Pacific Islander presiding for the first time over the General Assembly at this session as its seventy-first President, and joins the international community in congratulating His Excellency Ambassador Peter Thomson on his historic election. We wish him a successful presidency.

We gather here before the sombre backdrop of a world that is beset with multidimensional humanitarian, political, economic, social, peace and security and environmental challenges on a scale that is unprecedented in recent memory. Many of our countries, including my own, have not been spared from the adverse impact of the global situation, and we continue to reel from them. Those challenges are unlikely to be overcome in the short term or by individual countries on their own. That reminds us all of the importance of ensuring that we, the peoples of the United Nations, renew and strengthen our resolve and faith in the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

The ongoing sad plight of millions of refugees and migrants — including internally displaced persons and those that have paid the ultimate sacrifice with their lives — should not and cannot become the new normal. No country is immune from the implications of that increasing global concern. My Government in Papua New Guinea — in accordance with our international human rights obligations and in close partnership with Australia — hosts, on a humanitarian basis, a regional processing centre on the island of Manus for asylum-seekers who have made perilous journeys from troubled areas of the world, including the Middle East and Asia. That bilateral arrangement has not been without its controversies. My Government has accepted the decision of our Supreme Court earlier this year to close down the facility, as the arrangement was found to be unconstitutional. My Government is now in the process of dismantling that facility and looking at other arrangements with Australia to resettle those refugees who do not wish to settle in Papua New Guinea.

We are committed to being part of the global solution to the affront to the dignity of humanity and human rights imposed by forced migration. We pledge to act together with the international community to address not only the root causes of that issue, but also to better assist the affected victims and impacted countries of origin, transit and destination. The desire to halt the inhumanity and indignity must be our moral compass. We therefore commend and support the strong leadership shown by the Secretary-General and other leaders of the world in directly addressing that serious issue, particularly through the World Humanitarian Summit and other relevant meetings on migrants and refugees.

In the context of human rights protection and promotion, Papua New Guinea welcomes this morning's adoption by the Human Rights Council of the set of recommendations for Papua New Guinea's second universal periodic review. As challenging as they are, my Government is committed to addressing the various issues raised in that report (A/HRC/33/10).

Papua New Guinea's Constitution sets the protection and promotion of human rights as an enduring and sacrosanct principle, to which we remain steadfastly committed. That encompasses all the rights and freedoms articulated in the Charter of the United Nations and particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other human rights treaty obligations under international law.

As Papua New Guinea embarks on implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other multilateral agreements, we are guided by our National Strategy for Responsible Sustainable Development, our Medium-Term Development Plan and the long-term strategic Vision 2050 development road map as we work towards becoming a prosperous, secure, healthy, peaceful and progressive nation. The importance of ensuring the fundamental and inherent rights of our citizens continues to remain central to that process.

For Papua New Guinea, the key to realizing the enhancement of our citizens' human rights and freedoms while ensuring our fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals also hinges on fostering the right

enabling environment. That includes the rule of law, good governance, capacity-building, economic growth, multi-stakeholder partnerships and national ownership and leadership. Papua New Guinea's concern for human rights is also demonstrated by our long and proactive membership in the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization, which addresses the aspirations for self-determination of colonized peoples and territories. That process must be completed, and our commitment remains undiminished.

Papua New Guinea is concerned that the international community, despite all its efforts, is unable to contain the ongoing wars caused by economic, religious, ethnic and other factors, including acts of terrorism. My Government is hopeful that the high-level meetings conducted over this past year will help address many of the root causes of those conflicts.

Many of today's ongoing conflicts are also fuelled by the proliferation of firearms, especially small arms and light weapons. We therefore welcome global efforts to regulate the arms trade, which will minimize global conflicts and the displacement of people.

The United Nations Charter and the universal and transformative Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development are instructive on the nexus between peace, security and sustainable development for the benefit of humankind.

Let us seize this opportunity to work hand in hand in order to resolve the simmering conflicts and tensions that continue tragically to afflict many parts of the world. Those events have dire consequences not only for those directly affected but also for the rest of the international community. Papua New Guinea joins the international community in calling on all adversaries in armed conflicts around the world to lay down their arms and resort to peaceful means for the settlement of conflicts.

On nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, Papua New Guinea is staunchly opposed to their existence, testing and use. Complete disarmament of those murderous weapons is what the world needs for peace and security. In that regard, Papua New Guinea is concerned over the ongoing nuclear weapons and missile tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in contravention of the relevant Security Council resolutions. We strongly condemn such acts, as they threaten regional and global peace and stability.

For our part, my country is making a modest contribution through the United Nations peacekeeping operations in South Sudan and Darfur. We stand ready to work with the United Nations and further cooperate in international peacekeeping. We also learned hard but important lessons from our own internal armed conflict in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville two decades ago. We thank the United Nations and other partners for the valuable support provided in resolving that conflict. At the regional level, we continue to effectively support the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands as it transitions to its conclusion next June.

The year 2016 has been heralded as the year of the implementation of recently adopted international development agreements, in particular the transformative and inclusive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which underscores the importance of eradicating poverty and ensuring that no one is left behind. It now forms the key driver for multilateral and bilateral cooperation, as well as national engagement, in improving the quality of life for all.

We therefore welcome and support the sensible theme for this General Assembly session chosen by the new President. The challenge is to ensure that the 2030 Agenda is led and driven nationally with support, as necessary, from development partners. To that end, we appreciate and have supported the first high-level review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are committed to ensuring their full implementation in our country and globally as well. Papua New Guinea agrees with the high-level political forum's outcome, which recognizes that the key to the 2030 Agenda hinges on ensuring national ownership and leadership, multi-stakeholder engagement and partnership, and a paradigm shift away from the business-as-usual modus operandi.

My Government is committed to delivering on the SDGs for the people of Papua New Guinea. We are building on the important lessons learned from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. We are in the process of translating and integrating the SDGs at the national level within the framework of the National Strategy for Responsible Sustainable Development. That is further guided by our medium-term plan and our long-term Vision 2050 development plan for a prosperous nation.

My Government recognizes that the 2030 Agenda aligns fully with our current national development priorities with regard to education, health, infrastructure, sustainable economic growth, and law and order, which we are already implementing throughout the country. In that regard, my Government has legislated and is implementing a robust and unprecedented decentralized governance structure that now enables our 89 districts throughout the country to be fully funded and directly involved in identifying, designing and implementing the national development priorities specific to their respective areas. We are engaging the private sector, faith-based organizations and civil-society organizations, which are adding value to our national development.

We also stress the importance of mobilizing resources, including financial support from all available sources, so as to be able to deliver on the SDGs nationally. That is why the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on funding for development is pivotal and needs to be fully implemented. At our national level, we have recently concluded taxation-system reforms so as to strengthen financial resource mobilization in support of our national development agenda.

The attainment of the SDGs at the national level is also dependent on the growth and strength of the global economy. The ongoing depressed global economy, with low agricultural commodity prices compared to prices in the petroleum, oil and gas and mineral sectors, continues to constrain our national efforts to achieve sustainable development. We urge concerted global efforts to spur our economic growth so that we can support delivery on the SDGs.

For us, development cooperation is also an important element that constitutes 40 per cent of our annual development budget and remains a key component for the successful pursuit of our national development priorities, including the SDGs. For development partners to be meaningful supporters of national SDGs efforts, it is imperative that they align their assistance to national development policies, strategies and plans rather than undertake parallel paths that can be unhelpful.

Papua New Guinea is highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. Therefore, in order to demonstrate our commitment to combating climate change, we supported the adoption of the Paris Agreement in December 2015, signed it in April 2016, and ratified and deposited the instrument of ratification at the Secretariat yesterday. We welcome and congratulate those countries that have ratified the Paris Agreement, and we urge those that have not yet done so to do so, particularly countries that emit high levels of carbon.

I am also pleased to inform the Assembly that we have signed a privileges and immunities agreement with the Green Climate Fund yesterday. That will assist in facilitating the funding and support necessary for the implementation of our nationally determined contributions.

As an archipelagic State, Papua New Guinea is concerned with the state of the world's oceans, since a large proportion of our people's lives and livelihoods, including our cultural heritage, is linked with the oceans and seas. The health, productivity and resilience of the oceans and seas are increasingly under threat from uncontrolled and poorly regulated human activities, including illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, land-based pollution, plastic and marine debris, and ocean warming and acidification. In order better to address those concerns, my Government recently approved an integrated National Oceans Office, and we are setting in place, in close partnership with our development partners, the necessary policy framework and legislation.

At the regional level, under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum, our collective support, leadership and advocacy for a healthy, productive and resilient oceans and seas have been harnessed under the region's Pacific Oceanscape Framework. Papua New Guinea therefore welcomes and endorses the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 on oceans so as to advance action on the world's ocean development agenda. Likewise, we commend the United States Government for convening the Our Oceans Conference last week to address those concerns, including through the promotion of partnerships.

It is also important to ensure that the activities on the high seas not compromise efforts to conserve and sustainably use ocean resources within our national jurisdiction. For that reason, we urge a timely conclusion to the Preparatory Committee process on the elements of a draft text of an international, legally binding instrument, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, on the conservation and sustainable

use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

We look to a secure future for our people, based on the sustainable development, management, conservation and use of our ocean and its resources. We must urgently change the way we think about our ocean and its resources. Transformational change and action must start now.

The international community is all too familiar with the constant and increasing calls by Member States and other stakeholders to reform the United Nations system, including the Security Council, so as to reflect today's global circumstances. While Papua New Guinea recognizes that changes in any institution are never easy, we remain concerned about the slow and merely incremental pace of the reforms of the United Nations. With respect to the Security Council, while we welcome the incremental progress made in the past year, we have, however, witnessed in the process of the selection of the next Secretary-General of the United Nations over the past few months the unjust and archaic procedures and processes that render the majority of sovereign Member States unequal in this premier multilateral forum that espouses sovereign equality.

Another glaringly unfair practice in the existing United Nations system is the underrepresentation of qualified women at the senior management level of the Secretariat. The United Nations must not merely preach about gender equality and empowerment, it must be seen to exercise and implement what it advocates. Nevertheless, Papua New Guinea commends the Secretary-General for his efforts to reform the United Nations system. Every effort must be made by all Member States to ensure that the United Nations is reformed to better suit today's world and be fit for purpose so as to serve its membership justly and fairly.

We thank the outgoing President of the General Assembly for his innovative initiative to introduce transparency and inclusiveness for Member States in what has long been a closed and opaque process in the selection of a new Secretary-General of the United Nations. Papua New Guinea notes the process underway to select the next Secretary-General to succeed the incumbent, whose term comes to a conclusion at the end of December 2016. Papua New Guinea looks forward to working with the next Secretary-General, and we pledge our support in continuing the reform agenda.

On behalf of Papua New Guinea, I join previous speakers in paying tribute to the current Secretary-General for his outstanding leadership in bringing the international community together to address the unprecedented challenges during his tenure of office. For Papua New Guinea, he has also been the champion of small island developing States and the Pacific. We deeply value and appreciate the fact that he is the only serving United Nations Secretary-General who has visited our region twice and has also enabled a regular annual dialogue with Pacific Islands Forum leaders, including his invitation to tomorrow's meeting. Those actions clearly attest to his visionary and caring leadership for our regional issues. On my Government's and the people's behalf, I wish him and his wife good health and every success in his next endeavour.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yun Byung-se, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Yun (Republic of Korea): In 2015 in this Hall, the international community shared its concerns on the state of the world: conflicts and civil wars, terrorism and violent extremism, climate change, epidemics and grinding poverty. Unfortunately, the oversupply of problems and the deficit of solutions remains unchanged. The sense of crisis paradoxically drew us together to achieve historic milestones, namely, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

For the United Nations, 2016 marks the first year of the next seven decades. It is also the first year for implementing the noted landmark achievements. In an increasingly interconnected world that faces a daunting array of complex challenges, the central role played by the United Nations is more crucial than ever. In order to address that multilayered equation in a sustainable way, the United Nations needs to heed calls for inclusive multilateralism, that is, multilateral efforts to include the vulnerable, the isolated and the unempowered.

The World Humanitarian Summit, held in May, and the high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of migrants and refugees, held this September, represent part of such joint efforts in that regard. Most of all, we have the flagship blueprint for inclusive multilateralism, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its promise for a world that leaves no one behind.

The Republic of Korea is often referred to as a success story for development. As such, we are ready to share our experiences for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Over the past year, my Government launched major initiatives in the areas of education, women's empowerment, science, technology and rural development. We have introduced Korea Aid, a new development cooperation initiative, a mobile, customized service delivered to those in need. Vulnerable groups are already experiencing better health and medical services, as well as enjoying adequate food and cultural activities.

The SDGs and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change are inextricably linked to the future of our planet and our people. They should be mutually reinforcing and lead to a virtuous cycle. In that respect, as the host of the Copenhagen Green Climate Fund, my Government is taking domestic steps to complete the ratification of the Paris Agreement as soon as possible this year.

The successful implementation of the SDGs relies on the strong anchor of peace and security, as well as respect for human rights. Peace in the fullest sense can be achieved solely when peace and security, development and human rights are advanced together, and that is the essence of the new concept of sustaining peace. It broadens peacebuilding from post-conflict contexts to the whole spectrum of conflicts. We share the renewed awareness of the idea that conflict prevention should be mainstreamed in all United Nations activities.

As has been noted by many speakers this week, a frequent signal of looming conflicts is the violation of human rights. In conflict prevention, reading the writing on the wall before it is too late is imperative. We know that from experience, such as in Syria, Libya and Afghanistan. Another symptom is the spread of violent extremism and terrorism. Those are multifaceted challenges, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. We need a holistic, inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach.

This year, the United Nations embarks on its next 70 years. For us, 2016 is also an important symbolic year: just 25 years ago, the Republic of Korea, together with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, became a State Member of the United Nations. Two Koreas were admitted simultaneously, but we had a dream that in the future, there would be one Korea, just like one reunified Germany in 1991. Looking back at the track record of those two Members, there can be no starker contrast. As President Obama remarked earlier this week here in this Hall, one has taken the path of success, while the other has become a wasteland (see A/71/PV.8).

The reason that North Korea has failed is because, among other things, of its fanatical and reckless pursuit of nuclear and missile programmes. North Korea has been the first and only country to conduct nuclear tests in this century. So far it has conducted five such tests, violating multiple Security Council resolutions. Just yesterday, at the eighth ministerial meeting of the Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, 43 countries issued a joint statement condemning Pyongyang's nuclear tests in the strongest terms. North Korea is the first and only country to develop nuclear-weapon programmes under the regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and it has announced its withdrawal from both the International Atomic Energy Agency and the NPT. It is also the first and only country to officially declare itself to be a nuclear-weapon State in its own Constitution.

North Korea's recent nuclear tests show that its programmes have neared a tipping point. The latest test was the strongest ever. The interval between tests has also been significantly reduced, from three years to eight months. Given the country's unpredictability and penchant for provocations, the next test and nuclear provocation may come even sooner than we expect. North Korea has also fired 22 ballistic missiles of various types this year alone, amounting to one ballistic missile almost every 10 days. The nuclear and ballistic missile tests show that North Korea is now at the final stage of nuclear weaponization. Even more worryingly, not only has it advanced its nuclear and missile capacity, it has publicly threatened to actually use those weapons preemptively, with the potential to strike my country, the Republic of Korea, in four to five minutes. With such a direct existential threat to our survival, my Government has no choice but to take the defensive measures necessary to protect our nation and citizens.

In the wake of North Korea's fifth nuclear test, the Security Council agreed to begin working immediately on appropriate measures based on Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations, and it is currently discussing a new draft resolution on North Korea. We believe that the Council should adopt stronger, more comprehensive sanctions that go beyond the scope of

resolution 2270 (2016), close its loopholes and further expand and reinforce the existing measures.

In that context, we need to find an answer to a more fundamental question, namely, North Korea's repeated violations of and non-compliance with Security Council resolutions and international norms, which are unprecedented, with no parallel in the history of the United Nations. They show that North Korea makes a complete mockery of the authority of the Security Council, and thereby of the United Nations itself. It is crystal clear that North Korea, as a serial offender, has manifestly failed to uphold its pledge to abide by its obligations under the Charter, particularly the commitments to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council. I therefore believe that it is high time to seriously reconsider whether North Korea is qualified to be a peace-loving Member of the United Nations, something that many countries are already questioning. At the East Asia Summit held recently in Laos, my President warned that, unless we put a brake on Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions today, we will regret it tomorrow. This is our last chance.

North Korea's fifth nuclear test not only revealed its unambiguous nuclear ambitions, it also exposed its utter disregard for its own people. At a time of the worst flooding that it has experienced in decades, North Korea went ahead with its nuclear test in the very region that was hardest hit by the floods. It is estimated that North Korea has spent at least $200 million on nuclear tests and missiles this year alone, a sum that would have been enough to pay for flood relief. Two years ago, the report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (A/HRC/25/63), which detailed North Korea's systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations, was an eye-opener for the entire world. Its ripples spread to the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly, the Security Council and even beyond.

We live in an age of greater accountability today. North Korea's human rights abuses should no longer be allowed any impunity. It is also our common responsibility to protect the country's people when the regime defiantly refuses to do so itself. Now is the time for action. First, the international community's human rights mechanisms must come up with more robust measures. A group of independent experts on accountability should recommend practical mechanisms to enforce accountability for human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, particularly those that amount to crimes against humanity. Secondly, we must focus more on North Korea's so-called State-sponsored forced labour abroad. There should be greater scrutiny of the human rights of North Korean workers outside the country and of the possible diversion of their wages into North Korea's programmes to develop weapons of mass destruction. Thirdly, the international community should pay more attention to the desire of North Koreans for freedom and human dignity. They deserve better access to the realities of the outside world. For our part, we recently passed an act on the human rights of North Koreans, reflecting the nationwide consensus that we should no longer ignore the human rights situation in North Korea.

This year marks Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's tenth year in office and the last session of the General Assembly during his term. I would like to commend his commitment and leadership, and his remarkable achievements in a range of areas, notably on climate change, sustainable development, gender equality, humanitarian assistance and management reform of the United Nations. I believe that he has greatly strengthened the Organization's role and status through his efforts to deal with the unprecedented challenges that we have seen during a time of enormous transformation.

The United Nations is currently in the process of choosing his successor. I am confident that the next Secretary-General will strive to make the Organization stronger and more efficient by building on Mr. Ban's legacy. The founding principles of the Republic of Korea are at one with the spirit of the Charter's phrase "We the peoples". I hope that this year's session of the General Assembly, representing the peoples of the world, will help to increase confidence in the Organization as a beacon of hope in a turbulent world. And I would like to assure the Assembly that my country will continue to be a staunch supporter of the United Nations in its important and vital mission.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I now call on those representatives who have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply must be limited to 10 minutes for the first statement and five minutes for the second, should there be one, and that representatives should speak from their seats.

Mr. Maleki (Islamic Republic of Iran): The representative of the Israeli regime took the floor today in the Assembly (see A/71/PV.14) and once again tried to fool the whole world. He talked at length only about peripheral issues and matters unrelated to the issues at the core of the Palestinian questions that have endured for so many decades. That core concerns the land grab and the military occupation of the Palestinian territory. The situation continues to remind him and Israel's other representatives that, as long as the occupation of a people's land continues, that people will never stop fighting the occupiers. At the same time, the representative was also self-congratulatory about Israel's gains, in an attempt to blind his audience to the fact that he and his cohorts have done everything in their power to impose misery and despair on the people living under their occupation. As usual, he also tried to distract the world's attention from the military regime that Israel has created, the arsenal of nuclear bombs and chemical weapons that it has amassed, and the policy of military build-up that it has pursued for decades.

As usual, the speaker also repeated Israel's baseless fabrications about my Government. Although Iran is at the forefront of the fight against terrorism in the region, he accused us of being leaders of terrorism — without being able, as usual, to offer those present any proof of that. Indeed, quite contrary to his claims, it is now an established fact that Israeli agents have tended to Da'esh operatives who are active on Syrian territory in the vicinity of the Israeli border. There is now a mass of proof showing that a Da'esh terrorist has been admitted to Israeli medical facilities and has been treated there. The Israelis have claimed that they have done so out of their altruism and humanitarian instincts, claims that they also made while indiscriminately bombing and shelling schools and nurseries in the Gaza Strip.

Once again, a regime that is armed to the teeth with nuclear and chemical weapons and that has never hesitated to unleash its military hardware against defenceless Palestinian civilians continues to put out baseless rants against Iran's peaceful nuclear programme. The isolation of Israel and its head of Government during the efforts that were recently made to reach an agreement on Iran's nuclear regime clearly indicate that no world leader or Government will ever take seriously the baseless fabrications that the Israeli representative makes about Iran. More laughable today, however, was the Israeli speaker's accusation of Iran as expansionist, considering that the speaker is himself someone who has presided over the occupation of another people's lands and explicitly rejected any possibility of the establishment of a Palestinian State, including in March 2015.

I would also like to respond briefly to the claims made in the Assembly against the territorial integrity of my country. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its full sovereignty over the Iranian islands of Abu Musa and the Greater and Less Tunbs in the Persian Gulf, and categorically rejects any claim to the contrary. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always pursued a policy of friendship and good-neighbourliness with all its neighbour nations. In that context, my Government continues to stand ready to enter into bilateral discussions with the relevant officials of the United Arab Emirates with a view to strengthening our relations in various areas and thereby resolving any misunderstanding between the two countries. As has been repeatedly stated, the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its sovereignty over the aforementioned Iranian islands are not negotiable.

Mr. Giacomelli da Silva (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Regarding the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Cuba, I would simply like to reiterate what President Michel Temer of Brazil said in his address to the Assembly on 20 September:

> "As we are all aware, Governments of different political inclinations coexist in our region. That is natural and sound. What is essential is that there be mutual respect and that we agree on basic common objectives, such as economic growth, human rights, social progress, security and freedom for all citizens." (*A/71/PV.8, p. 8*)

The meeting rose at 9 p.m.